

AFTERMATH
FRASER.

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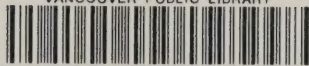
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Aftermath

Alexander Louis Fraser



AFTERMATH

BY

ALEXANDER LOUIS FRASER

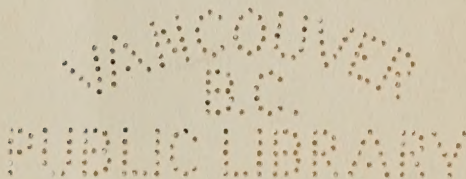
AUTHOR OF

“Sonnets and Other Verses,” “At Life’s Windows,” Etc.

Alexander Louis Fraser

“The harvest of a quiet eye.”

—Wordsworth.



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DEDICATED
TO
BEREAVED MOTHERS.

Mothers! What though they died
Ere dew of morn
Upon their brave brows dried,
Be not forlorn.

None had a greater task
Than they — your dead!
No pity do they ask,
They say instead:

"How rich it was to die
For something worth —
That Freedom's flag may fly
Around the earth.

"'Twere death to live below
And high tasks shirk;
Think thus, as sad you go
About your work."

13 July 49 - J. W. W. - 9.

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SONNETS

HALIFAX.

(On the eve of commercial expansion, 1914.)

Beauty and high Romance have homed in thee,
And Reverence within thy fanes has knelt,
And Hope upon thy sightly hills has dwelt,
Straining her eyes Fortune's new star to see.
Oft hadst thou heard how bland Prosperity
Upon thy sisters smiled ere Traffic came
From the great waterways and at thy knee
Told tales that fill thine eyes with dreams of fame.
Now that thy patient face is wreathed with smiles,
Be not as one Fortune intoxicates
By sudden store,— rather like him who waits,
Whom waiting proves, so no success beguiles.
Let not thy rose-bush die; above thy spars
That like a forest seem, behold the stars.

THE PIONEERS OF PICTOU.

Our sires — brave hearts that crossed estranging seas,
And broke the hush of the primeval wood,
Who lit their candles in the solitude,
And met the saffron morn upon their knees —
What though their homes were void of luxuries,
Learning ne'er begged, nor altars smokeless stood,
Nor Cheer nor Friendship lacked the joys their rude,
Kind, log-heaped hearths could give. It is to these
I bare my head! They wrought without the aid
Invention brings, ere smoke of Industry
Hung o'er these hills and vales; with care they made
This place a garden of the mind; and we,
Cradled in comfort, now bid Mem'ry hold
The fragrance of their lives in jars of gold.

HOMER'S PENELOPE.

Fate kept Ulysses for a score of years
Warring with Troy or the capricious sea,
While Grief's sad retinue — sighs, pains, and tears,
In Ithaca bode with Penelope.
Ah! then it was that Love was shown to be
A flower that frosts of absence could not blight,
Then that the soul's enamel, chastity,
In the world's dust and smoke could still be white.
And though 'neath centuries that age lies dead,
And shadows deep are on those fields of fight,
Penelope remains,— the tears she shed
Seem still as fresh as dew's of yesternight;
She looks as pure as the surviving rose
That in some old, forsaken garden blows.

ANDROMACHE.

When Hector, dedicate to Troy, and clad
In armour like to that which Vulcan made,
Bade thee adieu for war, thine heart was sad,
For the sheen left Astyanax afraid.
But when a jav'lin Hector's bosom found,
And to avenge Patroclus' fate he fell,
And to Achilles' chariot was bound,
Strong passions shook thee like the ocean's swell.
They are thy kin — those separated ones
Who through these days know but solicitude,
While boding fears flit o'er their fields of rest;
Who, when Death finds their consorts, sires, or sons,
Life's burdens bear with silent fortitude —
Thereafter wearing sackcloth on the breast.

TO A TEACHER.

I cannot tell where now your haunts may be,
My quondam teacher, but when first we met
With morning dew both of our brows were wet.
Then Restlessness had nigh persuaded me,
And laughed: "Shun Quiet, Toil and Drudgery,—
Old Learning's retinue; books disregard;
The trail of Truth is lone and steep and hard,
Come, follow Pleasure, happy, buoyant, free!"
'Twas then you met me where life's great roads crossed,
And led me to the bowered home of Thought,
To founts a score of summers have not dried;
And though the years have other helpers brought,
Without whose aid my way had oft been lost,
None meant so much as that May-morning guide.

THE PHYSICIAN.

Our beck or call he waits, or noon or night,
To homes of Luxury, or low, thatched cot,
'Neath smiling suns, or when the frore winds smite,
While oft the charms of Leisure are forgot.
One task is his — unto the human lot,
By countless ills begirt, to bring his aid,
As doth a gardener who rids his plot
Of noxious pests that lurk within the shade.
A shadowed brow tells how his cares are weighed,
Lest fell Disease should o'er his skill prevail;
But when its deadly ravages are stayed,
And Health plants roses on the cheeks long pale,
Reward is his beyond mere earthly good,
As he beholds the tears of Gratitude.

THE COUNTRY BOY.

I saw a tired-out mother rock to rest
Her dimpled boy, then fold him in his cot,
And I deemed, somehow, that she was distressed
At the dull quiet of a country lot.
She felt, perchance, her life resembled most
Those eddies which the passing streams despise;
And thought how happy they must be who boast
A home where city smoke blots out the skies.
Then I saw Fortune kiss her shadowed brow
There, in that humble home, far up the glen;
And in the gentlest voice she told her how
From haunts like those oft come the greatest men;
That Nature would be nurse-maid to her child,
And then she plied her needle — reconciled.

THE PYRAMIDS.

Ye dumb historians of a vanished day,
There oft is poetry in silent speech
No majesty of human song can reach!
And, lonely, in the garments of decay,
Your old, scarred, shadowed faces seem to say:
“We tell of dream-lit eyes that did beseech
Us keep their dust inviolate; and teach
That man in the world’s morning used to pray —
We tell, alas! of Power and Pageantry,
When here swart hordes, not Vallombrosa’s leaves
Outnumbered, wrought beneath a lidless sun,
While Toil’s sad face kind Pity ne’er did see —
And then we tell of shrouds that Time’s loom weaves
For every deed man selfishly hath done.”

REPARATION.

(Acts 16:33)

"He washed their stripes"—ah, would that you and I
Could wash the wounds our cruelty has made!—
But as in autumn, through the sylvan shade,
We see one wounded from the covey fly
Beyond the archer's ken, where it must die;
Or, as some smitten monarch of the wood
Is tracked a league or more by drops of blood,
Then all foredone, in a cold cave will lie
And wait for death's release, so there are those
Whose wings will never soar so high again;
Whose blood-marked way in the recess of years
Is lost; or who have found the grave's repose —
Would they were here that we might soothe their pain,
And bathe their wounds with our fast-falling tears.

PRAISE.

"If there be any praise."—Philippians 4:8.

"I praise you, brethren."—1 Cor. 11:2.

Slow-footed Praise! I see thee coming late
Up to a home where something on the door
Tells thee that Death's sure step reached there before
Thy tardy feet, and lo, laid out in state,
Is one who for thy face and voice did wait.
Thine arms piled high with flowers to make death's room
Look like a garden in rich summer bloom,
Thou'rt just in time his hearse to decorate!
But think! those flowers, if given one by one,
Had cheered the road through many a yesterday,
Had brought the sight of bees and birds and sun
To fields on which the spell of winter lay;
For words of cheer, spoken of work well done,
May weave a rainbow in a sky of gray.

TO FRANCE.

Sister of ours! who keeps the world in cheer,
Whose eyes are beautiful, whose lips are sweet —
When at thy rich-carved door thou late didst hear
The wasting tread of the invader's feet —
That ancient enemy who had returned
To plunder what expressed the soul of thee,
The fires, some thought were dim, all brightly burned,
And thou didst pledge thine all for Liberty.
France! the world knows from History's blood-dipped pen
What rich thoughts, what great deeds were thine of yore;
And Fame will tell how thy stout-hearted men,
These trying years, the brunt of battle bore —
How German hopes lie buried at Verdun,
How Freedom there a glorious victory won!

TO AN INKWELL FOUND AT ETON COLLEGE, 1916.

Thou humble servant unto noble Thought
Which lived at Eton once — ah, couldst thou tell
With what rich legends thy sealed lips are fraught,
How would I listen to thee, little well!
Perhaps some poet fed from thee his pen —
Impulsive Shelley, clad in robes of flame,
Or shy and studious Gray, for high-souled men,
Like these, gave Eton its immortal fame.
Or did rare Gladstone call thee once his own?
Or Wellington touch thee with iron hand?
O, tantalizing silence! — thou hast known,
I ween, such gifted lads, a happy band,
Who left the Berkshire fields, and went afar
To arts of Peace, or agonies of War.

THE PERILS OF THE CITY.

“She crieth at the entry of the City.”—Proverbs 8:3.

Wisdom is standing by the city gate,
Through which there pass Youth's free and agile feet
And brows whereon Home's kisses still lie sweet,
To warn that artful Evil there doth wait,
As when a huntsman sets his luring bait
To trap wings that can dally with the sun,
Or feet that fleetest winds can scarce outrun,
And leave by shadowed crag or glen a mate
'Mid heedless silences! She tells of those —
Hard Folly's servants — who the unwary take;
How golden pinions to the dust are brought;
How Caution may outwit insidious foes;
And then she weeps as though her heart would break
When simple thoughtless ones regard her not.

EVASION.

“Pilate . . . sent Him unto Herod.”—Luke 23: 6, 7.

As when a hare, which baying dogs retard,
Taketh an opening, and is soon away,
So Pilate thought: “Good luck! this very day
Sees Herod (whom he inwardly abhorred)
In Salem's streets;” and then, with feigned regard,
Ordered them thither, for he doubtless thought
This was the happy ending that he sought —
But his fictitious peace full soon was marred.
As one who meets, by chance, an injured friend —
One he had hoped dwelt still in foreign lands —
Uneasy is; so Pilate when they wend
Their way to him again: “My hapless hands
Fate still doth load! Ah! must I then decide
What to this wondrous stranger shall betide?”

PICTOU ACADEMY, 1816—1916.

What leaves the name of Greece so wonder-fraught?
Not spacious wheat fields slanting to the sea,
Not that she had all needy states in fee,
Not chiefly that her soldiers bravely fought;
Others had these who now are clean forgot —
'Twas that Mind had a home there; that her eyes
Turned toward the soul and upward to the skies,
And that she left rich legacies of thought.
And if old History, in the far-off years,
Deem our land great, not size alone will do;
Utility must leave us fonts of tears
And hills of Dream; and when that day shall come,
The lips of Praise again shall not be dumb,
But tell, as now, the debt we owe to you.

DALHOUSIE CENTENARY, 1818—1918.

Here where the mighty pulse of Empire beats,
Here where the iron gates of Commerce swing
That room be made for sinewy Trade to bring
To anchor, or to send abroad, her fleets,
Rose modest, thorough, one of Learning's seats,
Whence for a hundred years Thought showed the way
To realms where Beauty, Truth and Wisdom lay,
Like to some trusted guide a traveller meets
'Mid storied scenes. Here came they, young, keen-eyed—
Those thousands now upon her sacred roll;
Here taught to see, to think, to do, to bide,
Here taught their kinship with the mighty Whole
Of things, they, going world-wide did their part
In war or peace, at council, altar, mart.

ON THE DEATH OF RUPERT BROOKE.

Thy death was but one lovely poem more —
The last and greatest ever done by thee:
Color it had — our fleet, the scented shore
Of old Romance; and it had energy
That touched the world; and music all its own,
For thou hadst trained thy soul to rich emprise;
And when War's iron lips their charge had blown,
Thou couldst not stay 'neath lotus-laden skies.
'Twill be a note in songs the Ages sing;
And slowing prows to Scyros isle will swing,
Where bared heads oft will listen for thy lyre,
When cease the booming guns and purple rain —
Yea, mem'ries of thee will be like a fire
Where decadent times may light their torch again!

TO LIEUT. ROBERT HENDERSON.

(" Killed in Action " at Vimy Ridge.)

Grown folk and children turned aside to weep
When in the list of dead they found your name,
And they gave Mem'ry little things to keep:
That voice, those eyes, that hand, and never the same
Their life can be, for on their soul of souls
Is that best boon that friend can get from friend,
As home's touch often a boy's life controls
What road soe'er his wandering feet may wend.
For in your many-windowed house of days
Have we stood by you, looking at the world;
High was your purpose then; in quiet bays
Far higher now, that your white sails are furled;
And though earth's daylight has a paler hue,
Death has less terror since he went with you.

NOSTALGIA.

Now, that the spring has come, I'd like to go
And follow her across Acadian fields
To well-known haunts where first the Mayflowers blow,
And drink the fragrance that the forest yields.
To go and sit where old Atlantic beats
His endless music — walk beside the bays,
Upon whose bosom Fancy saw strange fleets
Set seaward 'neath the skies of yesterdays.
I'd like to go straight to that dell of green
Where spring's first cup of color overflowed;
To walk till sunset, where Surprise is seen
At every turn, upon a country road;
Then, ere I left, once more to view the spot
Where Time has laid our friends — dear, unforgot.

SERVICE.

The greatest things are never paid for here,
Too costly they for paltry gold to buy.
There are so many things we measure, try
Their weight, and in a trice say, "cheap" or "dear,"
Give this for that, 'tis ours, and we are clear
Of obligation else; but there are those
To whom the world a long arrearage owes —
They who upon Need's altar, year by year,
Like some shy worshipper, their lives have laid.
Who can reward the mother whose brave son
Becomes a state's chief pillar? Who the youth
Who fought and fell that Freedom's cause be won?
Or him who healed the sick, or taught the truth?
Self gets his due. Service toils, though unpaid.

THE MIND.

The human mind has blood and hands and feet,
And it must suffer if it bides at home,
Like some poor sickly soul, who fears to roam
Beyond his garden walk, or keeps his seat,
While muscles dwindle, in some dim retreat
From which old tethered Custom never stirs.
Friends! let us be like Alpine travellers
And on Thought's uplands often let us meet
Those "thoughts that wander through eternity."
Two guides I know upon that lonely way:
And who with Milton goes will see the day
Blacken and brighten o'er humanity;
Dante will lead to where all souls abide,
And show, in spheres of rest, the glorified.

AN INSTRUMENT.

What various hands may use that little quill,
What various ends that little quill may serve —
Childhood's soft touch its simple task fulfil,
To draw a square, or trace a dotted curve.
Business may add what it has lost or gained,
Or palsied age sign all its goods away;
While what it wrought in other spheres has waned,
It may survive within a poet's lay!
What various powers may use a human life —
One, Plunder-laden, is by Death surprised,
One proves a hero in a nation's strife,
One serves when Duty's force is mobilized —
Rusted, unused, aside this one may stand,
While that may be God's very voice or hand!

THE SANCTUARY.

We bless Thee, Lord, that every Sabbath day
This mother-world of ours, with tear-dimmed eyes,
And dusty face doth at Thy bidding rise,
And to the sanctuary make its way,
And by the stream, from Calvary's hill, doth stay
To wash defilement off, until, at length,
Like one emerging from the bath, new strength
Again will through its sluggish courses play.
And ere unto the sleepless street it goes,
For one rare moment, at Thy windows here,
Sees plain what common levels ne'er disclose —
Islands of rest, immortal seas within,
Whose sacred shores nor Sin nor Death comes near,
Visions that light the road 'twixt inn and inn.

VISION.

He was a lonely cobbler, and he wrought
Within a tiny room one summer day,
When a kind warder of the soul did say:
"Do you not feel, good sir, betimes distraught
In this dim place?" Thereat the cobbler brought
Him to a window that o'erlooked the sea:
"When I am weary, that doth comfort me —
Those boundless spaces, aye with wonder fraught!"
And like that kindly man we, too, have sighed
For human lives that mean and meaner grow,
And fain would ope for them a window wide
Through which across the dust a breeze might blow
From fields of asphodel — yea, longed that they
Might see what past'earth's low horizons lay.

"KIN UNKNOWN."

No mother wept when thou didst take thy leave,
No home hopes now in vain for thy return,
No saddened family for months shall grieve
When from some messenger thy fate they learn.
Still thou art not unclaimed, for Britain knows
That thou didst cross the world for sake of her;
And thou, brave boy, art brother to all those
Whom Freedom doth in these scarred fields inter.
What was it made thee quit thy 'customed task,
When War's shrill bugle woke thy quiet vale?
Wouldst thou begin anew? In vain we ask;
But now where worth is known, they bid thee "Hail!"
And what if to this old world thou wast strange?
Down storied fields with heroes thou dost range.

THE RECRUIT.

He went, and but a lad — his mother's pride;
For cross his playground, ere his play was through,
The shrill, clear clarion of Duty blew,
And all his childish life was laid aside.
He went, and with great causes was allied,
He fell! — and when thou'lt pass his home, make bare
Thy head for bleeding Sorrow's sake, for there
Grew one who for the commonwealth has died.
And as the bridge Traffic doth safely tread
Has, at its base, stones hidden deep in ground
Which shoulder all — you who will yet enjoy
The well-built fane of Peace, where shall be shed
A healing love, and where there shall be found
A home for Concord — think, then, on this boy!

THE LONGEST DAY.

There is a sadness in the longest day.
We feel somehow the year has seen his best;
He seems to look around, then make his way,
With shortening breath, down to his snow-wrapt rest.
But 'tis not so — his best is yet to be,
When his child, Autumn, shall with gifts abound,
And when, at happy Yuletide, we shall see
His snow-white head with wreaths of holly crowned.
Then tell me not that life's best part is gone,
Because the high noon of the day is here;
There is a beauty in the twilight deep
One has not felt at any hour since dawn;
And what is there for tired man to fear
When night comes in with stars and dreams and sleep?

LEGACIES.

How poor the child that has no legacy —
No tender memories of childhood's days,
No pleasant recollections of sweet ways,
Better by far than gold or silver fee:
A mother's brow, hand-shaded, reverently
At grace or prayer; the unforgotten bliss
Of bedtime, with its play and prayer and kiss!
Poor child, although your home in palace be,
If soulless Haste, alas! be mistress there;
And if heart colors are not woven deep
Into life's background; if you never knew
At supper-time, the hush that ushered prayer,
Or hands that waved you to the shores of sleep,
And isles of dream — dear child, I pity you.

SERMONS.

That flower is not the creature of a day;
But many moons gave to it of their toil
And fixed its roots deep in the mellow soil —
While on its tender leaves there fell the spray
Of night dews and soft rain, and the sun's ray
Those golden tints upon it did bestow,
Until that perfect thing we see it blow —
Adorning thus the bosom of sweet May!
'Tis like the sermon that one sometimes hears —
Nor ever wrought by the rude hand of Haste;
But is the blossom of a life, and grows
Where Thought has deeply delved, where dews are tears;
Thus it has Nature's beauty like the rose
That greets a traveller on life's weary waste.

THE NEWSPAPER.

As each new morn holds up thy mirror face,
What glimpses of the human lot we see:
Sometimes the blood-marked path of War we trace;
Or steps to fane of Peace where Amity
Stands looking skyward for a milder morn;
Sometimes we see fields scorched by Famine's breath;
Or Plenty in earth's lap doth pour her horn;
Or storm, or pale disease, takes toll for Death.
Sometimes we see Crime thread the dim-lit street;
Or Charity, well-laden, seeking Want;
Or Progress hand in hand with Hope we greet
On quests that no discouragement can daunt.
May God forbid that breath of Mammon should
E'er dim thy face — thou friend of solitude!

TO LEONIDAS.

Thou dauntless Spartan of a deathless day,
What though the heels of Force did tread thee down,
And thy three hundred, at Thermopylae,
Two dozen centuries have left thy crown
Undimmed; and now, puissant soul, we find
In thee the race an attitude assumed —
Its form is seen against Time's sky out-lined,
And its eyes are with high resolve illumed.
And, Leonidas! thou wilt meet with joy,
And kiss on some far, green Elysian field
Each homing, war-purged soul — or man or boy,
Who, like thyself, for freedom's sake did yield
His life, and, kissing, say: "Brother, we died
That Honor might in the old world abide!"

THE JUDGMENT'S REHEARSAL.

We knew War's brazen brow would be uncrowned;
For in a world ruled by the Holy Child
Some home for blessed Peace must aye be found,
And Freedom, Reason, Truth ne'er be exiled.
So when on that last act the curtain rose
And miles of battleships to our fleet bowed
In awful silence, o'er our fallen foes,
I seemed to hear old Justice speak aloud:
"'Tis a rehearsal of the Judgment Day!"
All Wrong take heed, thy sway will end likewise;
Though feet of Vengeance for a while delay,
God, Nature, History — all against thee rise,
And those base exiles whom the Furies keep
Proclaim aloud: "What peoples sow they reap."

THE SPENDTHRIFT.

As when a half-grown boy, who makes his way
To school, some morn, with lunch box in his hand,
Midway upon a country road will stand,
And lift the lid and eagerly survey
His mother's thoughtfulness for him that day;
And bit by bit the box is emptied out,
Till, when the others open theirs at shout
Of glad noontide, and join in lusty play,
He seems like one apart — a bankrupt lad!
So there are those who, in life's early morn,
Ere they its shining thoroughfares have found,
Lay waste their powers, and find the journey sad
Through after years; for trees, of blossoms shorn,
In autumn will with barrenness abound.

PROGRESS.

Near an Atlantic bay one morn in spring
A wedge-formed flock of geese came flying low,
Then suddenly around were seen to swing
And up against the driving breezes go.
When with full wings they reached a dizzy height,
And, turning, crossed the same brown, furrowed land,
A lad in wonderment surveyed the sight,
And their strange movements fain would understand.
Then Age: "My boy, I've seen this many a time,
While with the wind they go, they earthward tend;
Instinct bids them resist if they would climb"—
O sacrament of Nature! We ascend
As do these God-taught travellers of the sky,
When 'gainst life's winds with beating wings we fly!

TO A CHILD.

Idyllic is thy world, my little boy —
A plot where Heaven's plant, hearts-ease, groweth sweet,
A bower where Care's sharp thistles ne'er annoy
The head of Rest; and flower-fringed roads thy feet
Tread 'neath a cloudless sky the long, long day!
In such a world — an Eden verily —
With clear-eyed Innocence I watch thee play;
But soon old father Time will beckon thee,
And he will lead thee through a crowded gate
That suffereth not a traveller to return,
Beyond which, and beneath broad skies there wait —
Strangers to thee erewhile — whom thou wilt learn
To know, as we, before, have known with gain —
Toil, honest-faced, Ambition, Sorrow, Pain.

THE OLD CRADLE.

Ah! no, the hammer of the auctioneer
Upon that humble thing must never fall;
Chairs, sofas, dishes, pictures — let them all
To highest bidders go. There's nought so dear
In all the house as this; for, ah, while here
We children slept, what gentle touch it felt,
What anxious motherhood beside it knelt,
How oft upon us sleepers dropt a tear!
Elsewhere the plain old cradle shall not go,
To feel the touch of some strange, vulgar hand;
But on the morrow, ere our leave we take,
We, whom the years have left, alone, will stand
And watch it burn; then from Love's urn we'll shake
Its sacred dust where mother's roses blow.

TO A BLIND SOLDIER.

'Twill be a comfort if you call to mind
How Milton lost his eyesight long ago
Fighting for Freedom. Caution tried to show
O'er-work would dark his windows; he declined
To cease. War with Salmasius left him blind;
Thereafter he must work at night, and though
He saw nor man nor woman, friend or foe,
Achieved immortal things, and was resigned.
Be cheerful, friend! You have his company,
And angels of Content, white-winged, to give
Solace to you and inner fortitude.
Then there are visions they alone can see
Who never see Distraction — they best live
Whose soul's high hopes are ever unsubdued.

CONSOLATION.

You gave your only son, and on his head,
As he went out, you laid your lily hand:
"My son . . uphold till death . . the motherland,"
In husky tones, those were the words you said.
To-day you found his name among the dead!
At Langemarck he helped to win the day,
When at such price the foe was kept at bay;
Weep not, dear mother, pray be comforted.
For God, the Father, too, gave up His Son,
And sent Him to a passion-ridden world,
That from the thrall of sin it might be won;
But 'gainst Him Hate's artillery was hurled.
Then, mother, think! With God you are allied,
For in the cause of Freedom Christ, too, died.

TO ROBERT BURNS.

(Read at the Unveiling of a Statue to Burns at Halifax, N. S., Sept. 13, 1919.)

Death does not Freedom's force demobilize,
So thou art linked with these great times of ours,
And here today our hearty plaudits rise
In recognition of thy deathless powers.
For after all the court of Time is just,
And Merit's due, though oft delayed, is sure;
All that we do for self returns to dust,
All that we do for others shall endure.
Oh! thou whose gifted voice wise Nature chose
When she would utter forth her fire-filled heart
To help the weak, or smite with scorn all foes
That go disguised, thy sympathy impart,
That mortal frailty we the kindlier scan,
That honor die not between man and man.

CHARLES KINGSLEY, 1819-1919.

Life is the word of all the words I know
That suits thee best, for such rich life was thine,
Though lover, priest, knight, teacher we combine
All are inadequate thy worth to show.
Thy house was many-windowed here below —
Had bird or beast, flower, child, or o'er-worked men
Than thee a better friend? Or where, or when
Did Home's fire in this old world brighter glow?
How thou didst gladden at new sights and sounds,
And thirst for Truth, while fountains of Delight
Were pure to thee which often are defiled
To meaner folk. Thy spirit chafed at bounds
That irksome Sense imposed, yet in its might
There ne'er was lost the wonder of the Child.

EPICTETUS.

In Rome's proud world they deemed thee but a slave,
And bitter tears the Fates gave thee to drink;
But all adversities still left thee brave,
For old Philosophy taught thee to think.
So through this world where many lose their way,
Frightened by fears, by semblance oft deceived,
Blithe thou didst go, nor felt the least dismay,
But what the Gods assigned gladly received.
Though winds of centuries have drifted deep
Mounds by the road we human travellers wend,
And down our fields the same old shadows creep,
Truth shines like stars in the kind skies that bend
Above our heads; but should its light e'er wane,
Thy kindling thoughts will make it bright again.

COLUMBIA, HAIL!

Columbia, hail! thy great word has gone forth;
'Twill glad those who have watched three springs make
green
Their comrades' graves — those who have stood between
Democracy and Ruin, that on this earth
Her home might stand: that she might light her hearth,
Read, think, open her shops, and make her way
Across the world. 'Twill glad all those who say
That her ideals are of priceless worth.
Columbia, hail! the sore suspense is done;
No longer we the scale uncertain count —
Into it thou hast thrown men, swords and gold,
Yea, condemnation stern — naught to withhold
Where due. Let the foe watch his doomed scale mount,
Now so outweighed. Hail! Strike! Man's cause is won.

THE COLONIES.

Thou dear, old mother, still untouched by age,
Whose deep, grey eyes survey the long-loved sea,
Whose home, the home of Justice, Liberty,
Now that against thee enemies do rage,
It is no time that trifling deeds engage
Thy children's hands — no hour for levity!
What child cares not when 'gainst Adversity
The long-left home a cruel fight doth wage?
We tell our children of thy glorious deeds —
(This page will make faces unborn to glow)
And now we send them forth that whoso reads
The annals of these stirring days may know
Our mother's kiss upon our brows is wet,
Through arteries of sea her blood flows yet!

THE LAST PLAY TOGETHER.

That last day dawned, and Fortune seemed to say:
"When night comes down, this little girl and boy,
Who found in each life's gold without alloy,
Will, when their mothers call them in from play,
And bid them lay their little toys away,
Be unaware what I to them have done —
That with the rising of another sun
Their skiffs will go each on a separate way
From these still waters; and though hills of sand
Their little fingers raised submerged may be
What time the sea-waves break upon the beach;
And when they meet, full-grown, Formality
Be there, yet through the years Mem'ry her hand
To Innocence and Happiness shall reach!"

VIGILANCE.

(Exodus 2: 2, 3)

"Three months she hid him"—in the slave hut there,
For well she knew that Pharaoh's wrath would smite,
As storms the lambs new-yeaned; or frosts that blight
The two brave flowerets; and she watched with care
Lest cry of his should find the listening air,
Whose dusty pinions bore adown her lane
Plaints for Oppression and for Childhood slain,
And the sad, heart-deep moanings of Despair.
"And when she could no longer hide him"—O
The tears of that! Ye mothers, ply your hands,
And ye child-warders, wareful be; for so
Evils would make your little ones their prey,
While on life's highway beckoning Fortune stands,
And one by one with her they go away.

COMPENSATION.

When her two boys had unto manhood grown,
Death laid them side by side one flowery May,
And she, hand and heart empty, sad and lone,
Asked tearfully: "Is it not true that they
Are happier far who never bore a child,
Who never heard the little feet about?
Easier to be born blind than reconciled,
When looking up one finds his light is out?"
But when I said, "Now you know mother-love;
Now you can better feel another's pain;
The sons you lost await you safe above,
And you will press them to your heart again;
And heaven, for you, through all the endless years
Will richer be," a rainbow spanned her tears.

FAITH.

"And, Doctor, since you say that I must die,
I fear to step into that unknown land,
Pray tell me, if you can, what 'tis doth lie
Beyond this life,—'twill be as if some hand
Held mine. You shake your head! Ah, can it be
That you, a godly man, should fail to know?
If you have aught to help one, oh, tell me
What 'tis that lies beyond this, ere I go!"
Just then a dog leaped 'gainst the big hall door,
And when it opened to the master flew;
The Doctor, thus: "It ne'er was here before,
And yet it entered bravely, for it knew
I was within — and so we'll pass and find,
Beyond Death's door, a Master good and kind."

THE YEAR'S END.

To me the vanished years appear today
Like traversed fields which Time's hand led me through:
Field after field, behind, they lie — no two
Alike; and some, alas! are far away,
Sunlit, flower-grown, where I left Youth at play,
And some were laced by Pleasure's silvery stream,
And some had slopes where Thought had time to dream,
And some were crossed by Traffic's beaten way.
But I have gleaned a little here and there,
Which cold Utility passed heedless by:
A song of childhood, and a face I met
On Sorrow's bridge; a walk with Friendship where
The foliage fades not; and a bit of sky,
A height revealed — these I have with me yet.

“CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE.”

(2 Cor. 3:18).

A careless unkempt daughter of the street
Halted one day within the public square
Before a wondrous statue she saw there —
Features where angel's graces seemed to meet,
And deemed she heard it say, in accents sweet:
“Beholder, think! for you again may be
As white-browed and divine as I”— then she
Pursued her sinuous way with weary feet,
And, to her mirror, clomb the dim-lit stair,
Then washed her face, and smoothed her matted hair
Freeing long-buried kisses! and each day
To study its perfection she returned,
Until within her soul new powers had play,
And on life's ash-strewn hearth the old fire burned.

WAR.

How thou dost quench the fires of Industry,
While whistles, muffled by thy hand unblown
Remain! and Trade's great routes by Danger sown
May lead to death, far fathoms deep in sea.
Behold what maddened passions now are free
To wreak their worst; Restraint is overthrown,
And over fields of Peace this brood has flown —
Pain, Sorrow, Famine, Ruin, Cruelty.
And yet, thou blood-stained one, old History shows
How Progress wrought a mighty work by thee,
And made an anvil of a bit of ground
To forge the fate of Freedom; and 'tis found
That groans of dying causes oft are throes
That mark the birth of Truth and Liberty.

LYRICS

LIFE.

I asked him, "What is life?" and he replied:
"Not mere existence; 'tis the attitude
The soul of man takes up to what he meets.

* * * * *

Whether we see it when a daughter stands
Upon the sunny threshold of glad Youth,
Declining the entreaty that Love makes,
And then goes back into a quiet home
To nurse her aged parents and to kiss
The cross that she must bear through lonely years.

* * * * *

Whether we see it in the man who wakes
From his intoxication and resolves
Upon the neck of Appetite to plant
His spirit's foot; who falls, not to remain
Among his broken resolutions, but forthwith
Asserts himself, winning as wins the sea,
When the returning tide goes up the beach.

* * * * *

Whether we see it in some knight, high-souled,
Who left a well-selected road to fight
The enemy of Freedom, but alas!
Died ere he struck a blow, cut down, perchance,
By illness ere he saw the battle-lines;
Or, maybe, to a shell-hole, wounded, crawled
To die — while an unfinished conflict swayed
This way and that — the issue still in doubt.

* * * * *

These heard the finer voices of the world
And turned thereto with faces glory-lit;
And when such die, with gain of gold or place
Denied them, and their bodies mix again
With dust, unmarked, pity them not, for they
Life's secret knew. Their spiritual nature found
A kinship with high God, and so they lived.

* * * * *

Such lives upon duration ne'er depend.
The deed done — or untouched — 'tis all the same.
One year, or twenty, all the same, for lives
Like those have a completeness all their own,
For they are liegemen in the realm of Soul."

TO PICTOU.

(Written during a vacation.)

For a hundred winters and more
Young folk have turned unto thee,
Kenning thee as the herd kens
Where the clear springing water is,
And I am walking to-night
Thy quaint, steep, familiar streets;
Voices I hear from the past,
And I see the faces of those
Who jocundly climbed these same streets,
(What ladders some have climbed since!)
Slept at night in these houses,
Called the place "home," met and parted
At these same shady street corners
On many peace-filled yesterdays.

* * * * *

I find myself thinking of thee
As a port in the realm of the mind,
To which these young voyagers steered,
Sojourned a while, were equipped —
Then found the world's busy waters,
And went far, bearing an impress of thee.

* * * * *

What a kind mother wast thou,
And, mother-like, I believe
Thou thinkest often of those
Who lay for a while on thy breast,
Or knelt for a while at thy knee;
And I know thy heart has been glad
When on some high field of endeavor
Thy children brought honor to thee.

* * * * *

So live thy contemplative life,
Quiet, unconscious of greatness;
Let other skies be smoke-filled,
Thou hast a deathless distinction;

Thou art kin to those cities of old
Who talked of the mind and the soul.
Dwell still by the sea, lofty, clear-eyed,
I sleep in thy borders to-night,
Keeping tryst with some whom I knew,
Who carry under strange skies
Deep in the last heart of all
Thy dear old temple of Truth,
These same hills and streets, and see
Sights the world cannot erase.
Thy words of instruction they hear,
The rhythmic lap of thy tides,
Beating again and again —
Sounds the hoarse world cannot drown!

“KILLED IN ACTION.”

He heard the call his country made,
He bade the place of Ease good-bye,
Like some old knight of high crusade —
But ah! he went to die.

He sought the thickest of the fight
Where thunder-bolts of war were hurled,
They found his dead arms circling tight
Props that keep up the world.

“Dead! and so soon”— you say, “alas!”
You think, perchance, ’twas all in vain,
But showers that glad the thirsty grass
Are made of drops of rain.

And men who followed his great stride
Have now new thoughts of human worth —
Soul force like his you cannot hide
In a few feet of earth.

The years will pass; Time’s balm will show
On the world’s breast nought but a scar,
But proud his boys shall be to know
He died in the great war!

*FAILURE.

When at his easel a great artist wrought
A man, all snowed with years, his paintings brought;
And as at school a bright-faced lad will raise
His slate to catch his teacher's eye, and scan
Her brow to read the verdict there, this man
Hoped so for one assuring word of praise.

But Beauty's servant felt he dare not lie —
Yet who could quench the light within the eye
Of him who, just to know the truth, elate,
Had brought some bits of twilight work to find
Their worth by canons of a master mind,
And for an answer did all breathless wait?

Awhile the stranger saw the shadows play
Across the artist's brow, then heard him say:
"You ask for truth; this work . . is little . . worth!"
The trembling man then showed a piece he had
Hid 'neath his cloak: "This, sir, was by a lad:
What think you of it? Is it, too, of earth?"

"Dear child of genius!" was the quick reply
"His morn gives promise of a golden sky;
A soul speaks here, and, whose soe'er it be
Unto the common crowd doth not belong;
His listening ear hath heard the speechless song,
His eyes have seen unveiled Reality!"

Thereat the man, with half-averted face,
"'Tween these two sets can you no likeness trace?
This, too, is mine — I caught it long ago
In happy morning fields, all wet with dew."
The artist sighed as the sad form withdrew:
"What golden mornings into greyness go!"

* (Rossetti, who was the artist referred to, told Watts the story suggesting the above. An authority calls it "one of the saddest stories in the annals of art.")

TO A WOUNDED SOLDIER.

For nigh two thousand busy years,
Before Christ's hands and feet and side,
Millions of men have stood in tears,
Because it was for them he died.

Devotion still doth kiss each scar
That He bore with Him to the skies —
And, knightly soul! who in this war
Hast made for us such sacrifice,

While thy road may henceforth be dark,
Or thou must go with limping gait,
Bear proudly, boy, thine honored mark;
We on thy handicap will wait.

DEATH NO INTERRUPTION.

We talked until his train was gone,
I thought much since of what he said
About the new time soon to dawn —
And now they tell me he is dead!

And so I think how Browning saith,
As night around Pompilia lowers:
"No work begun shall pause for death" —
Surely a balm for times like ours.

Death closed his book and dried his pen,
Curtained the splendor of the sun;
Old Custom says: "He died," and then
We weep to think his work is done.

No, 'tis not done — that cannot be,
I heed not what dark Sorrow saith,
In God's great labor-house we'll see
No work begun hath paused for death.

WONDER.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy."— *Wordsworth.*

Her home by city walls was bound,
A little child of seven was she;
Echoes her fireside heard — like sound
Of shells that tell of the great sea.

One morning in the Summer-tide,
When aye the sun the cold earth warms,
Her father took her for a ride
To where begin the peace-filled farms.

Upon a knoll together they
A moment stretching fields surveyed,
And though she's dead now many a day
He hears her yet speak half-afraid,

As up she looked, her eyes ablaze,
Set 'neath gold locks, by Nature curled,
"Daddy!" she said, in deep amaze,
"O, Daddy! say, is *that* the world?"

TO OUR MUNITION MAKERS.

While you toil on, far from the blood-red field,
Believe that every blow your tired hands give,
Forges yet stronger that resistless shield
Behind which Liberty alone can live.

And as you tend the fires both noon and night,
This, honest toilers, I would have you learn,
Without your aid, in Freedom's home, the light
Our fathers kindled soon would cease to burn!

IN A CEMETERY.

What a still place is this! around me lie
Travellers who take their rest. In from life's road
They came, these hundred years, led here by death.
Lo there white Age, tired of the weary way
Laid down his burden of mortality!
Beside him one whose plans abortive were;
That mother must have found it hard to die,
Fearing her brood would feel the nest grow cold;
Death interrupted this bright lad at play
And in some room his bat is on the wall;
This grave, Ingratitude hath quite forgot,
Although, 'tis said, he left his purse to her.

* * * *

Lo, Memory and Affection, hand in hand
Come up the walks, to trace with careful eye
Some mark that Time doth nigh obliterate,
While at the gate a silent crowd doth halt—
Death gives another to the earth's embrace!

* * * *

Why fear the ground? it grows the fragrant flowers
It gives us food, it kindles all our fires,
And these frail bodies are its very kin.

* * * *

Just listen to that bird, it sings and sings!
And seems to bid us think of Him who put
Them in His matchless sermons ages since;
Who laid His head within a common grave,
And then came back and told us not to fear
For He had been there and had found no harm.

* * * *

Ah! how this place doth dim the glare we see
In objects whose sole hall-mark is the world's;
How it subdues the little spites we bear
Across the world's ways which we soon must leave;
How it reminds us that with empty hands
We each and all must come at last to this;
How it should send us back to scan the sky
To see how far our sun has yet to go,
And make us earn our rest ere night comes down!

TO A CHILD DEAF AND BLIND.

Tradition says great Homer, too, was blind —
A type of all who see, for only when
Men are driven in upon themselves, can they,
All undistracted by the world, behold
With inner eye, what other eyes see not.

* * * *

While many may expend their energy
In common ways, and life an outlet find
In song and shout and play, and all their house
Be open to the world, a silent place
Is thine! No noisy waves can beat against
Thy quiet shore, nor suns e'er penetrate
Thy curtained panes, nor canst thou dissipate
Thy powers, as we, at fever heat, do here.
Thou livest in a sanctuary pure;
For gates through which the world's gay retinue
To others find access, to thee are barred —
Thou ne'er hast seen defilement of the world,
Thou ne'er hast heard unseemly speech, and we
Can scarcely deem what like is thine abode;
Yet life in thee feels out for this fair world,—
Thy hands are eyes and ears and memory,
And thou hast guests, perchance, more choice than ours.

* * * *

But we are oft mere creatures of Desire,
And powers lie, all unused, like fallow land,
Or strings untuned. So, dear God, find a way
Beyond life's suburbs to our heart of hearts,
That we may learn to bide at home awhile,
That we may sit a little space with thought,
That we may get acquainted with ourselves,
That we may get to tolerate ourselves,
And know another world than that which beats
So loud and long against the doors of Sense!

A PRAYER FOR PARENTS.

Oh! Father, spare us both until
Unto our children we fulfil
The service they require;
For, Lord, behold how weak they be,
The world — how full of cruelty,
Of evils that conspire.

Of hardest toil we'll not complain,
So we a competence may gain —
Their daily need supply;
And if, O Lord, Thou wilt us spare,
Till for each other they can care,
Then we will easier die.

Who pities not the feeble lambs
Too soon bereaved of their dams,
The little birdies, too,
That miss the mother's downy wing?—
Ah, then without Home's comforting
What would wee children do?

But when they to full stature grow,
And Death calls us, then we will go
The way that all must take;
For when spring is to autumn grown,
And the old nest is left alone,
The birds their way can make.

Meantime our thanks each morn shall rise
Around our hearth unto the skies,
Whilst Thou dost leave us tend
Our little plot — then by and by
The full-grown plants will weeds defy —
Yea, can themselves defend!

TO —————

I'd like, dear boy, to go as then we went
Up the high hill, along the old wood road,
Tracking the cattle hoof-marks in wet earth,
And drive them home, and hear their sweet bell tune,
Then romp the evening fields, and talk and talk.
How little was the world we lived in then!
Yet earth had its loud noise and strife, I ween,
And dizzy ladders which Ambition climbed;
But this was all unknown to you and me.
This rainy evening doth recall those days
When autumn chill winds made the hearth-fire bright
And still we oft were loth to go indoors.
I walked there yesteryear,— but all alone,
For the world's shadow followed as I went
And I met none but Memory and Regret.
I sometimes wonder are there fields in heaven;
Then surely we will roam there, arm in arm,
And talk about that other heaven we knew,
Ere the big world peeped at us o'er the hill!

THE SABBATH.

The Sabbath has many uses —
It bids us ascend the hills,
So that life may have the element of distance;
It enables us to practise detachment,
It keeps us from being buried —
From being lost amid mere bundles of things,
It helps us to preserve our identity.
Ah! there are many who disappear
Among material things as completely
As a coin a child loses; they become
Enveloped as a vehicle wrapt in a cloud of dust.
How worth while, then, to stand upon a hill,
And feel, at least once a week:
“Here am I — and yonder lies the world!”

SACRIFICE.

His foam-flecked steeds he reined,
And by a door did light,
But ere the steps he gained,
The furious things took fright.

He sprang, and held them fast,
And would their speed restrain,
But then a bugle blast
Made all his efforts vain.

They dashed along the ground,
They bruised him with their feet,
And so when he was found
Far down the crowded street,

He was by all deemed dead —
But oped each glazed eye,
When some bystander said:
“A race with Death!— and why?”

“O why should one incur
Such risk for horse or wain?”
Then he was seen to stir
And spoke in spite of pain:

“The wagon — search — I pray!”
And then, the father’s joy,—
Upon fresh-scented hay
They found a sleeping boy!

They bore the father, dead,
They gazed with tear-dimmed eyes,
But nowhere was it said,
“What needless sacrifice!”

THE FLAG.

I bare my head before thee,
And deeply, deeply I adore thee!
No power shall pull thee down:
 Britain's sun shall never set.
But the gems within her crown
 Shall glow even brighter yet.

A happy mother, she,
Surrounded by her family;
Proud as a mother when,
 Her children all full grown,
Pure women and brave men,
 Take places of their own.

Sons, daughters, every one
Are with her till the war is done;
Age will tend the home fires;
 Weakness, needles ply;
Youth will go where she requires,
 Even though it be to die!

To us thou'rt dearer far,
Baptized anew by this great war,
Thy folds have been a beacon
 On many a swaying field;
And when a cause did weaken,
 Thou wast to it a shield.

I bare my head before thee!
More than ever I adore thee!
At the gateways of the world,
 Till Time's lips say: "Good night,"
Thy folds shall be unfurled,
 A champion of the Right!

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Thou art the "door"— ah, then we are outside
Until we enter into life through Thee;
Thou art the "way"— there is no path beside
To lead us through this world of mystery.

Thou art the "truth"— no words are deep as those
By which thou dost the fears of thought allay;
Thou art the "life"— the greatest of our foes,
Death, with Thee by, can cause us no dismay.

Thou art the "light"— outlasting sunken suns,
And Thou wilt show each league 'tween this and home;
Thou art the "Shepherd"— bidding foolish ones
No longer from life's verdant pastures roam.

Thou art the "bread;" Thou art the "water," too;
In Thee all souls meet nourishment may find —
Thus everywhere, O Christ, things come to view
That bring Thy many-sided life to mind!

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

When people move to a new house
Some things they leave behind,
Because they are not worth taking.
To-morrow, Time will bid me
Move into a new house,
And Prudence bids me leave
All useless things I gathered through the year,
They take up room.
So, to-night, ere I leave the old year,
I'll bury, with the light of waning stars,
All petty things, little grudges and imagined ills,
Not worth keeping, and take only kind and lovely things
Into the new house, whose door is opening now!

AN APPEAL.

Upon these fields of Flanders and those plains of Italy,
Brothers! At this dire moment there is waged titanic
strife;

Nearly every stream in Europe now runs red unto the sea,
From hills, war-tramped, where freedom is sore struggling
for her life.

And we were happy, happy lads at home but yesterday,
With bat and ball, with oar and rod, with song and feast
and mirth;

War's challenge made us men at once, and broke the charm
of play,

And here we'll die ere Freedom shall be driven from
the earth.

Think! Some will see the fourth Yuletide dawn to the roar
of guns;

For all who lie 'neath folded hills we cannot stop to weep,
And we — Freedom's last citadel — must face the furious
Huns,

And on the frontiers of the world appointed vigils keep.

Then, brothers, can you wonder that, in mud and rain we
ask

When, in the lull of firing, we wipe our smoky brow:

"O, where in all the future will you find a grander task,

Where will a year of man's short life count more than
here and now?"

A MATIN.

There sang by my window a dear little bird

One dew-bathed morning in June;

He poured forth his heart ere the world had stirred,

And oft through the day it seemed that I heard

That sweet little birdie's tune.

As he told of the noise and the strife that intrude

To frighten loved Quiet away,

And how helpful to me it must be if I would

Walk but a few paces with Solitude

In the dawn and the dusk of Day.

THE KEY.

There is a key that opes the gate
That leadeth to the heavenly state.

Learning, my friend, is not that key;
What sages old have writ,
A man may read, and still may be
To pass that gate, unfit.

Rank will not find all bolts unbar
At her word of command;
Many whose deeds emblazoned are,
Without that gate must stand.

And Wealth, who at Preferment's door
Never stands unespied,
May at that gate rap o'er and o'er,
Yet entrance be denied.

The key to banquet halls above,
Or human hearts on earth — is Love!

THE CHURCH.

Thy Church, O Lord, is a body,
And we are its members:
Some are its feet,
And run on errands across the world;
Some are its hands,
Moist with the tears of Gratitude and Need;
Some are its lips,
Uttering the sweetest news ear ever heard;
Some are its eyes,
Lit with the wonder of common things;
Some are its heart,
Whose beats help the world to interpret Divine sympathy.
Thou art its life.
O vitalize us;
Forbid that any should be paralyzed,
And help us to be ourselves!

O CANADA!

O Canada! mother of sinewy sons,
History will show that when the hordes of Force
Were loosened, and old Freedom's citadel
Sorely beset, thou wast not so absorbed
In Mammon's counting house, nor thy young limbs
Entangled in the robes of Selfishness
That thou couldst not assist. Already thou
Hast giv'n thy best, and Flanders' autumns will
Scatter above thine unforgotten dead
Each year a golden shower of Maple leaves.
And unborn generations yet will take
From thy scarred hand traditions and a name,
Such as will make their stride o'er thy broad acres,
And down thy busy streets, a statlier stride;
And when, mantled with Peace, the Future calls the roll
Of those who said: "The lamp must not go out,
Let's guard the cherished birth-right of the race,"
Thou wilt stand up among the great and hear:
"God bless thee, Canada! thou, too, wast there."

IN AUTUMN.

To-day I took a road that wound
 'Mong homesteads fair and trim,
And as I journeyed on, I found
 That the horizon's rim
Seemed farther than in summer days;
 The sky seemed higher, too,
And great, clear unobstructed ways
 Came freshly into view.
So may it be when we are rid
 Of those immediate things
By which life's distances are hid;
 And the last leaf that clings
Is blown from our wind-harassed tree,
 That then, from Pisgah's height,
O'er frosted wolds, at last, we see
 What long was hid from sight.

"WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH."

Unto old Thames's osier-fringed shore
The Roman barges came
In those days when the robes that Caesar wore
Were wrought in looms of Fame.

Moorings they found where noisy London rears
Her countless spires and domes —
Where Trade and Commerce for a thousand years
Have built their spacious homes.

There yesteryear when Progress with her spade
The past spread out to view,
As when, in spring, flower-beds are open laid,
Strange-mantled flowers grew.

"They are not such as these fair islands know,"
Sage Science said, and told
How in dead Roman gardens, long ago,
They blossomed into gold.

But here, where camp-fires glowed, Chance let them fall
And after long delay;
Unharmed, they heard old Nature's clarion call
Like men, in judgment day.

And, Toiler, though thy harvest tarry late,
Drive Doubt far from thy field;
What seemeth nought, so thou in patience wait,
A hundred fold may yield.

LIFE'S WINDOWLESS HOUSE.

How small the world to which a man may creep,
With low and starless skies above his head,
Year in and out to rise and toil and sleep,
Asking naught else — to such life is but bread.

How sad to see no radiance round him play,—
Who fills his little place from sun till sun,
Who hears no challenge of the calling day,
Nor sees life's glory ere his life be done!

TO A COUNTRY CHURCH.

There thou dost stand, upon the choicest spot
The scattered hamlet owns — a sacred plot,
Defined long since, that noisy Traffic ne'er
Across thy peace should cut her thoroughfare.
Dear little place; men leagues and leagues away
Think of thy haunts of rest each Sabbath day.
Thither they came, holding a mother's hand,
These twice ten years within the sinless land;
And though they home in crowded cities now,
And in the silence of great temples bow,
Thou hast a place Affection's shrine within
No late-discovered rival e'er may win —
Thou art a garden 'mid life's winter snows
From which the rarest, sweetest fragrance blows!

FRIENDS.

Within her lilac bush last year
A slender nest she found,
Where parent birds, their brood to rear,
In labors did abound.

No shepherd o'er his flock of sheep
Could watch more jealously;
No sentinel, his vigil keep
With greater care than she.

Stern Cruelty she long withstood,
And Plunder kept at bay,
Until, at length, that helpless brood
Could safely wing its way.

And though her grave this year is green,
Those songsters sweet that stir
The soul to ecstasy, I ween
We somehow owe to her.

HIS LITTLE SHOES.

Here's where I put his shoes away —
A battered, touching sight;
They tell of one who used to play
From early morn till night.

They oft have been to Fairyland,
Where he with elves had talked;
And far on Mystery's misty strand
These little shoes have walked.

Oft Flora called them to the mead,
There with Content to roam —
When mundane things they did not heed
Till hunger led them home.

They went to wars upon the lawn,
Abroad, far up the lane;
But since my little boy is gone
They ne'er shall stir again.

One day the angels beckoned him
To fields ne'er wet with dews;
So here I come with eyes tear-dim
To gaze upon his shoes.

THE ANTIDOTE.

(Ps. 37:4.)

When troubles drear to thee appear,
And thy weak faith is tried;
And sore distress, thou, seeking rest,
Art still unsatisfied,

Do not despair. Each carking care
To silence will be awed,
When this great word thy soul has heard,
"Delight thyself in God."

A VOICE FROM YESTERDAY.

A ploughman drove his dappled team
Adown the hill, beside the stream,
When lo! upon the serrate land
A half-hour he doth musing stand.

For there a coin and spoon he found,
With clayey cerements wrapt around —
Then Fancy's touch brings into view
Long-vanished years, Time's retinue.

In home-spun frocks two children pass
Like flowers that nod among the grass;
Now in the brook their feet they dip,
Now in the field like lambs they skip.

They play at shop and house until
Across the daisy-dotted hill
After a butterfly they go,
When coin and spoon away they throw.

The mother calls them in at eve,
The morrow's storm forbids them leave
Love's sheltering wings — thus 'twas the lot
Of these playthings to be forgot.

And though 'tis twenty years and more
Since they two died, each past four score,
The copper coin and silver spoon
Bring back a long-dead afternoon.

THE WOODS.

Come! let us seek the leafy wood,
And feel the moss beneath our feet,
Come! far within the solitude
A log shall be our seat.

We'll watch the timid dwellers there,
Feathered and furry creatures play,
And think of Him who has their care
And feeds them day by day.

We'll feel the balsam-scented breeze,
And hear the ripple of the brook,
While the cool shadow of the trees
Will canopy our nook.

Come! leave the world's dust far below
On streets where jarring noises fall;
Come! let us to the greenwood go
And hear its madrigal!

AT THE FAMILY ALTAR.

Before Thee, Lord of all, we bow
Who givest us another day;
And round this hallowed altar now
Our heart-felt thanks we pay.

Ah! some did vigil tapers burn,
Who but for Thee were sore distressed;
But as to life we safe return,
Gladness is still our guest.

We bless Thee for the tasks that wait
For us at home, abroad, at school;
These help us do, eager, elate,
And mind the golden rule.

Guard and keep pure from every stain
Both those who toil and those who play,
Till eve unites us all again,
And here we kneel to pray.



